

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

University of Montana News Releases, 1928,  
1956-present

University Relations

---

3-7-1996

### Where, oh where, has his little day gone?

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases>

## Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Where, oh where, has his little day gone?" (1996). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 14037.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/14037>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Relations at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

# The University of Montana

## NEWS RELEASE

University Communications  
Missoula, MT 59812  
(406) 243-2522

---

This release is available electronically on INN (News Net).

March 7, 1996

### WHERE, OH WHERE, HAS HIS LITTLE DAY GONE?

#### MISSOULA --

St. Patrick would probably roll over in his grave if he could see what goes on in his name in America's Irish strongholds on March 17.

This missionary who took Christianity to a druidic Ireland in the fifth century left behind a legacy of quiet, religious, sober March 17 remembrances of him in his adopted land. There, St. Patrick's Day is still a holy day of obligation, a day of quiet sociability that includes going to mass and then to the pub for conversation and a drink or two, says Dave Emmons, a history professor at The University of Montana—Missoula and author of "The Butte Irish."

A different mood grips Irish Americans on March 17. Parades and pubs rule the day, and from that first St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City in the early 1850s to the present, the occasion has never been quiet or particularly religious.

With their origins in "ethnic defiance," Emmons says, St. Patrick's Day parades in America "were designed to prove to the whole society the strength of the Irish Catholic community. They were a way of responding to intolerance and bigotry."

In late 19th-century Butte, the Irish could afford to show a little less defiance, Emmons says, because they ran the town. "They controlled the Democratic party, the city police, the sheriff, the miners' union and the Anaconda Co. The town's first 12 mayors were Irish Catholic."

-more-



Progress like this on the home front prompted the Butte Irish in 1915 to look elsewhere for a rousing St. Paddy's Day cause.

With anti-British sentiment ever an undercurrent, they seized upon World War I and threw their usual March 17 fervor into a parade demonstrating support of Germany in its battle against England. German and Austrian immigrants were invited to join the march, Emmons says, and the whole parading throng deviated from the traditional route and wove through the German and Austrian parts of town, waving the German, Irish and U.S. flags.

"It's a historical vignette that says volumes about the terrible ambivalence of the Butte Irish during the war years," Emmons says. "They never knew what side they were on, but they considered it the basest betrayal when America declared war on Germany."

These days, St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Butte are mainly cause for having a party. People crowd into the town from all around the state for the three-day celebration. Motels fill up for miles around. Bartenders get so busy they can't take time to make change, Emmons says.

To better accommodate tourism, the parade was moved this year to Saturday, March 16. The move could be seen as a measure of progress for Butte as a tourist attraction. But it has a made a lot of townspeople unhappy, Emmons says, and he calls the move "a surrender."

Heaven only knows what St. Patrick would think.

###

**Contact:** David Emmons, (406) 243-2986.

TB

Local, Butte media, dailies and weeklies

Paddy.rl